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Water: Safe Drinking Water Act

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Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA)

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) is the main federal law that ensures the quality of Americans' drinking water. Under SDWA, EPA sets standards for drinking water quality and oversees the states, localities, and water suppliers who implement those standards.

SDWA was originally passed by Congress in 1974 to protect public health by regulating the nation's public drinking water supply. The law was amended in 1986 and 1996 and requires many actions to protect drinking water and its sources: rivers, lakes, reservoirs, springs, and ground water wells. (SDWA does not regulate private wells which serve fewer than 25 individuals.) For more information see:

- [Laws & Statutes](#)
- [Regulations](#)
- [Guidance](#)
- [Definition of a Public Water System](#)
- [SDWA Fact Sheets](#)
- [Links to our partners](#) - Connect with federal, state and other partner organizations that also work to ensure Americans enjoy safe water.
- [Drinking Water Strategy](#) - Aimed at finding ways to strengthen public health protection from contaminants in drinking water.

SDWA authorizes the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) to set national health-based standards for drinking water to protect against both naturally-occurring and man-made contaminants that may be found in drinking water. US EPA, states, and water systems then work together to make sure that these standards are met.

- [Standards and Risk Management](#) – Learn about current and proposed drinking water regulations, basic information about drinking water contaminants, the regulatory process, and more.
- [Primacy](#) – States and Indian Tribes are given primary enforcement responsibility (e.g. primacy) for public water systems in their State if they meet certain requirements.

Millions of Americans receive high quality drinking water every day from their public water systems, (which may be publicly or privately owned). Nonetheless, drinking water safety cannot be taken for granted. SDWA applies to every public water system in the United States. There are currently more than 160,000 public water systems providing water to almost all Americans at some time in their lives.

There are a number of threats to drinking water: improperly disposed of chemicals; animal wastes; pesticides; human wastes; wastes injected deep underground; and naturally-occurring substances can all contaminate drinking water. Likewise, drinking water that is not properly treated or disinfected, or which travels through an improperly maintained distribution system, may also pose a health risk.

- [Public Water Systems](#)

Originally, SDWA focused primarily on treatment as the means of providing safe drinking water at the tap. The 1996 amendments greatly enhanced the existing law by recognizing source water protection, operator training, funding for water system improvements, and public information as important components of safe drinking water. This approach ensures the quality of drinking water by protecting it from source to tap.

- [Source Water Protection](#)
- [Operator Certification](#)
- [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund](#)
- [Consumer Information](#)

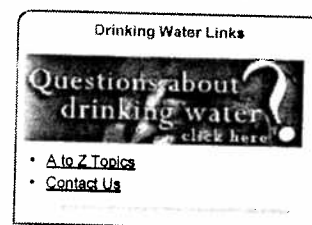
Underground Injection Control

The [Underground Injection Control \(UIC\)](#) Program is responsible for regulating the construction, operation, permitting, and closure of injection wells that place fluids underground for storage or disposal. Also, geologic sequestration (GS), which is the process of injecting carbon dioxide (CO₂) from a source through a well into the deep subsurface, has been the subject of regulatory action. This process with proper site selection and management, this new class of well could play a major role reducing emissions of CO₂.

SDWA Fact Sheets

The following fact sheets provide basic information about various aspects of SDWA:

- [Understanding the Safe Drinking Water Act \(PDF\)](#) (4 pp, 291K, [About PDF](#))
EPA 816-F-04-030, June 2004
- [Drinking Water Costs & Federal Funding \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 139K, [About PDF](#))
EPA 816-F-04-038, June 2004
- [Drinking Water Standards & Health Effects \(PDF\)](#) (149 pp, 2K, [About PDF](#))
EPA 816-F-04-037, June 2004



- [Drinking Water Treatment \(PDF\)](#) (3 pp, 250K) [About PDF](#)
EPA 816-F-04-034, June 2015
- [Drinking Water Monitoring, Compliance, and Enforcement \(PDF\)](#) (3 pp, 150K) [About PDF](#)
EPA 816-F-04-031, June 2015
- [Protecting Drinking Water Sources \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 140K) [About PDF](#)
EPA 816-F-04-032, June 2015
- [U.S. EPA's Program to Regulate the Placement of Waste Water and other Fluids Underground \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 155K) [About PDF](#)
EPA 816-F-04-040 June 2015
- [Public Access to Information and Public Involvement \(PDF\)](#) (3 pp, 230K) [About PDF](#)
EPA 816-F-04-039, June 2015
- [Water Facts \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 100K) [About PDF](#)
EPA 816-F-04-036, June 2015
- [Glossary \(PDF\)](#) (3 pp, 16K) [About PDF](#)
EPA 816-F-04-035, June 2015

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